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Morning Briefing

Thursday, August 11, 2016

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From Kaiser Health News:

KAISER HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES

1. Teaching In-Home Caregivers Seems To Pay Off

Intensive training for such aides helps reduce repeated ER visits and hospitalizations of elderly disabled people, a pilot project suggests. (Anna Gorman, 8/11)

2. Insurance Rules Can Hamper Recovery From Opioid Addiction

Medicaid and other health insurers require doctors to file time-consuming paperwork before allowing them to prescribe drugs that help people quit opioids. That delay fosters relapse, specialists say. (Jake Harper, Side Effects Public Media, 8/11)

3. Political Cartoon: 'Not Exactly'

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'Not Exactly'" by Joel Pett, Lexington Herald-Leader.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

GET MOVING

Deteriorate
In or out of hospital

Bed rest is quite bad.

- Anonymous

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please [Contact Us](#) and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.

Summaries Of The News:

HEALTH LAW ISSUES AND IMPLEMENTATION

4. Brewing Health Law Storm Could Rain On Next President's First Month In Office

The fourth Obamacare signup period ends about one week before inauguration on Jan. 20, and could set the tone for the future of the health law following a precarious year for insurers on the marketplace.

[The Hill: Next President Faces Possible ObamaCare Meltdown](#)

The next president could be dealing with an ObamaCare insurer meltdown in their very first month. The incoming administration will take office just as the latest ObamaCare enrollment tally comes in, delivering a potentially crucial verdict about the still-shaky healthcare marketplaces. (Ferris, 8/11)

In other news, Marilyn Tavenner talks with Politico's Pulse Check about her career shift —

[Politico: Marilyn Tavenner On Implementing Obamacare — And Then Lobbying To Change It](#)

At the start of 2015, Marilyn Tavenner held one of the most important jobs in health care: Implementing Obamacare, as the head of CMS. Six months later, she'd swapped it for a completely different major role: Lobbying to change Obamacare, as the head of America's Health Insurance Plans. It's an unusual career shift, and it's given Tavenner — a long-time government official turned top lobbyist — a rare perspective on the changes unfolding in the industry. (Diamond, 8/10)

CAMPAIGN 2016

5. GOP Candidates Distance Campaigns From 'Repeal-And-Replace' Mantra Of The Past

The health law, one of most politically charged topics of the day, has faded into the background of the 2016 elections. Meanwhile, The Washington Post looks at how talking about the candidates' mental health in soundbites can be a tricky business.

[Politico Pro: For GOP Candidates, Obamacare Is Not This Year's Rallying Cry](#)

The rallying cry to repeal Obamacare, a staple of Republican campaigns, is falling behind national security and the economy as the most prominent themes on the stump this year. Donald Trump typically makes a passing mention to repealing the Affordable Care Act, but he hasn't dived into the details. He recently promised to replace the health law with "something." (Haberkorn, 8/10)

[The Washington Post: Pundits, Take Note: Narcissists Aren't 'Crazy.' They Also Aren't Likely To Change](#)

Donald Trump has spawned a new industry, what might be called Trumpology — the study of his mental state and personality. Numerous pundits have suggested that the Republican presidential nominee has some kind of mental illness or medical condition that explains his boastfulness, intemperate outbursts and thin-skinned response to criticism. A recurring theme among these commentators is that Trump displays textbook signs of what psychiatrists call "narcissistic personality disorder." Not that Hillary Clinton has been spared the long-distance psychiatric evaluations. ... But psychiatric kibitzing is a slippery business. Largely lost in the conversation about Trump is the fact that a personality disorder is not a mental illness, strictly speaking. (Achenbach and Nutt, 8/10)

And in other news about Republican candidate Donald Trump —

[The Washington Post: Zika May Be Linked To The Disability That Donald Trump Mocked](#)

One of the lowest points of Donald Trump's campaign for the presidency has involved accusations that he mocked a reporter with a disability. "Now, the poor guy — you've got to see this guy," Trump said while jerking his arms in front of his body at a rally in South Carolina in November. ... [It] drew worldwide attention to a rare congenital joint condition known as arthrogryposis. Arthrogryposis typically affects development of the arms and legs and results in the joints being fixed in a bent or straightened position. ... A new study published in the BMJ on Tuesday suggests another intriguing possibility — that arthrogryposis may be yet another condition linked to Zika. (Cha, 8/10)

MARKETPLACE

6. In Setback To Insurers, Judge Sets Aetna-Humana Trial For December

The later trial date means a ruling isn't likely to come down until January. The companies have an agreement that if the merger isn't approved by Dec. 31, Humana has the option to walk away from the deal.

[The Wall Street Journal: Judge To Start Aetna-Humana Merger Trial Dec. 5](#)

A federal judge said Wednesday that he would begin trial proceedings on Dec. 5 in the Justice Department's antitrust challenge to the proposed merger of Aetna Inc. and Humana Inc. The start date is a compromise between the proposals of the two sides, but it also amounted to a setback for the insurance companies. When he opened a scheduling hearing Wednesday, U.S. District Judge John Bates said he was leaning toward an early November trial, which would have allowed him to decide the case before the end of the year. (Kendall, 8/10)

[Modern Healthcare: Aetna-Humana Merger Challenge To Be Decided In January](#)

A federal judge is set to hear the looming antitrust challenge against Aetna and Humana's proposed \$37 billion merger in December, with a decision coming in mid-January. According to media reports, U.S. District Judge John Bates scheduled the highly anticipated trial for a Dec. 5 start date during a status conference in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on Wednesday. (Teichert, 8/10)

[Bloomberg: Aetna Gets December Trial Date To Make Case For Humana Deal](#)

Health insurers Aetna Inc. and Humana Inc. will go to trial against the U.S. on Dec. 5 in defense of their planned \$37 billion merger, pushing a judge's decision on the tie-up beyond their deadline for completing the deal by year-end. The decision on the trial's timing came Wednesday after the Justice Department tried to persuade U.S. District Judge John D. Bates in Washington to delay the

start until January, after the companies' self-imposed Dec. 31 merger deadline. (Harris and McLaughlin, 8/10)

7. Specialty Drug Costs Are Top Reason Insurance Will Be More Expensive Next Year, Survey Finds

Meanwhile, other stories related to the insurance market focus on expenses for uninsured testicular cancer patients, a Georgia health system deal and a federal fraud indictment in Florida.

[The Fiscal Times: Your Health Insurance Will Cost More Next Year: Here's What's Driving Prices Higher](#)

The cost of getting your health insurance through work will go up an average of 5 percent next year, according to a new survey of large employers by the National Business Group on Health. The cost for employers will go up 6 percent. This is the third consecutive year that employers' health costs have risen by 6 percent. While that's still more six times the current rate of inflation, it's likely a smaller increase than will be experienced by consumers who purchase insurance through the public exchanges. (Braverman, 8/10)

Earlier, related KHN coverage: [Big Companies Expect Moderate Increases In 2017 Employee Health Care Costs](#) (Hancock, 8/9).

[WBUR: Study: Testicular Cancer Patients Without Insurance Fare Worse Than Insured](#)

Men with testicular cancer, who are without insurance or on Medicaid (government insurance for low-income patients), tend to have more advanced disease upon diagnosis, larger tumors and a greater risk of dying, compared with those who have private insurance, according to researchers at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. While testicular cancer is curable for most patients, even when it has spread, delaying treatment can lead to more advanced, and potentially fatal, disease, researchers write. That's why removing barriers — to both medical care and financing treatment — should be "an important part of the war on cancer," says Christopher Sweeney, a medical oncologist at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston and lead author of the study, published online this week in the journal *Cancer*. (Zimmerman, 8/9)

[Georgia Health News: Piedmont Renews Insurance Deal . . . With Blue Cross](#)

Piedmont on Tuesday announced the contract agreement with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Georgia, the state's largest insurer. It comes just weeks after Piedmont and UnitedHealthcare failed to reach a new contract. Piedmont hospitals and physicians have been "out of network" for tens of thousands of United members in Georgia since July 1. (Miller, 8/10)

[Tampa Bay Times: New Port Richey Pharmacy At Center Of Federal Insurance Fraud Indictment](#)

A New Port Richey pharmacy is at the center of a federal indictment that accuses eight people of obtaining millions of dollars in fraudulent reimbursements from private insurance companies, Medicare and the Tricare military health care program...According to the indictment, unsealed Tuesday, the co-conspirators used A to Z Pharmacy Inc. in New Port Richey and several Miami-area pharmacies to submit false claims for prescription compounded medications. (8/10)

PHARMACEUTICALS

8. Prosecutors Investigate Valeant's Link To Mail-Order-Pharmacy For Possible Fraud

The Wall Street Journal reports that the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan is looking into the company's relationship to Philidor Rx Services, and whether it defrauded insurers by hiding the extent of those ties.

[The Wall Street Journal: Valeant Under Criminal Investigation](#)

Federal prosecutors are investigating whether Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc. defrauded insurers by shrouding its ties to a mail-order pharmacy that boosted sales of its drugs, people familiar with the matter said. The lawyers, in the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan, are pursuing an unusual legal theory, previously unreported, that Valeant and a closely linked mail-order-pharmacy, Philidor Rx Services LLC, allegedly defrauded insurers by hiding their close relationship, the people familiar with the matter said. (McNish and Matthews, 8/10)

In other pharmaceutical news, the Food and Drug Administration OKs an anti-nausea medication and Eli Lilly stumbles with cancer drug —

[The Wall Street Journal: FDA Approves Heron Therapeutics Anti-Nausea Drug Sustol](#)

Heron Therapeutics Inc. shares rose as Sustol, the biotechnology company's extended-release version of the chemotherapy anti-nausea drug granisetron, received U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval. The Redwood City, Calif., company's shares, down 32% in the past year, rose 6.3%, to \$21.12, in early trading. Leerink analysts said the approval of Sustol ends a long saga with the FDA and its review of the injectable therapy. (Stynes, 8/10)

[The Wall Street Journal: Eli Lilly's Investigational Cancer Drug Hits Snag In Breast Cancer Trial](#)

Eli Lilly & Co. said Wednesday its investigational cancer-fighting drug failed to meet efficacy criteria in an interim analysis of a phase-3 trial for treatment of breast cancer. Shares slipped 1.8% to \$80.00 in premarket trading. Eli Lilly stock had climbed 6% in the past three months through Tuesday's close. The pharmaceutical manufacturer said the trial of the drug, Abemaciclib, will continue into the first half of 2017, at which point a final analysis of its primary endpoint—progression-free survival—will be disclosed, as well as overall survival and safety data. (Jamerson, 8/10)

Meanwhile, in California, pharmaceutical companies pour money to fight against a drug pricing ballot initiative —

[Los Angeles Times: The Money Is Starting To Roll In On California's 17 Ballot Propositions. A Lot Of It.](#)

The largest single block of campaign cash for November propositions is from the pharmaceutical industry in hopes of defeating Proposition 61. Drug companies, according to campaign records, have contributed more than \$50 million this year. Of that amount, more than \$35 million have been reported since July 1. Proposition 61 would ban state agencies from paying more for prescription drugs than the lowest price paid by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (Myers and Bollag, 8/11)

ADMINISTRATION NEWS

9. Obama Administration Lifts Restrictions On Marijuana To Aid Medical Research

Now, universities will be able to apply to grow marijuana, which experts say will alleviate the shortage researchers have faced before. However, the federal Drug Enforcement Agency has decided to reaffirm marijuana's classification as a "Schedule I" drug.

[The New York Times: Obama Administration Set To Remove Barrier To Marijuana Research](#)

The Obama administration is planning to remove a major roadblock to marijuana research, officials said Wednesday, potentially spurring broad scientific study of a drug that is being used to treat dozens of diseases in states across the nation despite little rigorous evidence of its effectiveness. The new policy is expected to sharply increase the supply of marijuana available to researchers. (Saint Louis and Apuzzo, 8/10)

The Washington Post: U.S. Will Affirm Its Prohibition On Medical Marijuana

The government on Thursday will refuse again to allow the use of marijuana for medical purposes, reaffirming its conclusion that the drug's therapeutic value has not been proved scientifically, according to government officials, and defying a growing clamor to legalize it for the treatment of a variety of conditions. In an announcement scheduled to be in the Federal Register, the Drug Enforcement Administration will turn down requests to remove marijuana from "Schedule I," which classifies it as a drug with "no currently accepted medical use" in the United States and precludes doctors from prescribing it. (Bernstein, 8/10)

QUALITY

10. Hospitals, Paralyzed By Fear Over Penalties, Are Tossing Organs, Refusing To Do Transplants

Surgeries involving imperfect organs and extremely ill patients are more risky, so hospitals that do many of them run the risk of poor outcomes that may hurt their performance on the standards.

Stat: Hospitals Refusing To Perform Transplants To Keep Ratings High

Hospitals across the United States are throwing away less-than-perfect organs and denying the sickest people lifesaving transplants out of fear that poor surgical outcomes will result in a federal crackdown. As a result, thousands of patients are losing the chance at lifesaving transplants, and the altruism of organ donation is being wasted. "It's gut-wrenching and mind-boggling," said Dr. Adel Bozorgzadeh, a transplant surgeon at UMass Memorial Medical Center in Worcester, Mass. (Ross, 8/11)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

11. Puerto Ricans Shrug Off Concerns As Zika Ravages Island

For many residents, Zika is just the latest virus to hit the island -- and it doesn't seem as scary as some that have come before it. But for researchers trying to contain it, it's terrifying. "This is something you would imagine if you were writing science fiction -- but it's the reality," says Brenda Rivera Garcia, the state epidemiologist for Puerto Rico.

NPR: Puerto Rico's Efforts To Stop Zika Are Hampered By Mistrust

Puerto Rico is in the midst of one of the worst Zika outbreaks of any region in the northern hemisphere. The island has been reporting roughly 1,500 new cases of Zika each week. Hundreds of pregnant women are already infected, and public health officials say the outbreak in Puerto Rico probably won't start to subside until September or October. Yet health officials also say efforts to stop the spread of the virus are being hampered by mistrust, indifference and fatigue among residents, over what some view as just the latest tropical disease to hit the island. (Beaubien, 8/10)

In other Zika news —

[Georgia Health News: Georgia Health Officials Prepare For Potential Zika Transmission](#)

Preparing for the possibility of local transmission, Public Health in Georgia has contracted with a private mosquito control company. The agency is also planning to release a 50-page response plan for health officials in districts around the state. And it's prepared to set up a call center in case of an emergency. The most important message, Drenzek said, is to protect pregnant women, who should be "well aware where Zika transmission is ongoing." (Miller, 8/10)

[Cincinnati Enquirer: Why Wasn't Alexandria Told About Zika Spraying?](#)

Northern Kentucky Public Health officials said Wednesday that privacy concerns prevented them from notifying the city of Alexandria about insecticide spraying around the home of a resident who picked up the Zika virus while traveling. "The spraying is done in such a concentrated area, a matter of blocks, around the affected person, that to identify the neighborhood would likely be a violation" of the federal patient privacy law, said Emily Gresham Wherle, spokeswoman for the public health department. (Mayhew and Saker, 8/10)

[Health News Florida: The Wynwood Yard Founder Talks Closing, Reopening And Positive Zika Tests](#)

It's been a little over a week since it was confirmed that the Zika virus has spread locally in Miami's Wynwood neighborhood. In the heart of that neighborhood is The Wynwood Yard—an all-outdoor food and culture venue. Within hours of the Zika announcement, Della Heiman—founder of the Wynwood Yard and owner of Della Test Kitchen—temporarily closed the space. She decided not to charge rent to the six other businesses at the Yard for the week they've been closed. (Mack, 8/10)

12. 'I Assume You're Calling About My Death': Clerical Errors Turn Some Into Living Dead

One day a man got a letter from the Social Security Administration offering condolences about his recent loss of life, and what follows is a Monty Python-worthy scramble to figure out just what happened.

[NPR: Alive But Ruled Dead By Social Security 'Data Entry Error'](#)

A few months ago, when Dr. Thomas Lee logged in to his patients' electronic medical records to renew a prescription, something unexpected popped up. It was a notice that one of them had died. Lee, a primary care doctor at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, was scheduled to see the patient in three days. "I was horrified," he says. ... He wanted to know what had happened, but he couldn't find anything in the medical records or in a Web search. "I just felt really guilty that I had not pushed harder to get him in sooner," says Lee. When he couldn't find out anything, he decided to phone the man's house to offer condolences — maybe even to apologize. "So I called, and to my shock he answered," says Lee. (Bichell, 8/10)

In other news, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services adds more measures to its nursing home star ratings system and researchers find value in training in-home caregivers —

[Modern Healthcare: CMS Adds New Quality Measures To Nursing Home Star Ratings](#)

The CMS has added five new measures that are being gradually factored into its nursing home star ratings intended to help consumers research and compare the quality of facilities...The calculations that determine nursing homes' quality ratings, which are posted on the CMS' website, Nursing Home Compare, will now include successful discharges, outpatient emergency department visits, nursing home admissions and improvement in function for short-term residents, or those who stay in nursing homes for up to 100 days. (Whitman, 8/10)

[Kaiser Health News: Teaching In-Home Caregivers Seems To Pay Off](#)

Kaiser Health News staff writer Anna Gorman reports: "Low-income Californians who are elderly and disabled were less likely to go to the emergency room or be hospitalized after their in-home caregivers participated in an intensive training program, according to a report. Under a pilot program, nearly 6,000 aides in Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Contra Costa counties were trained in CPR and first aid, as well infection control, medications, chronic diseases and other areas. All were workers of the In-Home Supportive Services program, who are paid by the state to care for low-income seniors and people with disabilities, many of them relatives." (Gorman, 8/11)

13. Maternal Mortality Rates Rise In U.S. -- Higher Than Most Other Industrialized Countries

Researchers aren't sure why the rates have increased, but think that women having children later in life and C-sections play a role in the grim statistics. In other public health news, the Pulse shooting provides lessons on how paramedics and other responders should act in the aftermath of such events.

[WBUR: 'A National Embarrassment': Maternal Mortality Rate Rises In The U.S.](#)

If keeping moms alive while pregnant and in the weeks just after birth is a good barometer of health care in a country, the U.S. looks pretty bad. A study published this month (Aug. 5, 2016) in *Obstetrics and Gynecology* says the maternal mortality rate rose 27 percent (26.6 percent) between 2000 and 2014 in the U.S. while 157 countries reported a decrease during the same period. Maternal mortality is still rare, but the increase is "a national embarrassment," said study author Eugene Declercq, a professor of community health sciences at the Boston University School of Public Health. "Our rates are comparable to Iran, the Ukraine and Russia, not countries we generally want to compare our health outcomes to." (Bebinger, 8/11)

[Health News Florida: Pulse Throws Out Conventional Wisdom In Disaster Planning](#)

When planning for a disaster on the scale of the Pulse Night Club shooting, researchers say it's important to study what actually happens — and not what you think is going to happen. Conventional wisdom often doesn't play out during a mass shooting. That these two survivors [Patience Carter and Akyra Murray] did the initial search for victims defies the conventional wisdom that police and paramedics do the search and rescue. (Aboraya, 8/10)

And media outlets report on stories from the states —

[PBS NewsHour: How Phoenix Became The Most Autism-Friendly City In The World](#)

Matt Resnik has helped changed the face of autism in his hometown. When he was diagnosed as a child, his parents poured their hearts into getting him therapy, even launching an organization, in hopes he would outgrow his challenges and find his place as an independent adult in the world. Instead, they've helped shape the world around him. (Donvan, 8/10)

[The Tennessean: Tennessee Lags In Cancer-Fighting Policies, Report Says](#)

Tennessee lags most of the country in policies designed to fight and prevent cancer diagnoses and treatment, according to a new progress report. The state received red or yellow classifications — falling short or making progress, respectively — in 10 legislative categories from the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network's "How Do You Measure Up" report. An estimated 37,650 people in Tennessee will be diagnosed with cancer in 2016, according to the organization. (Fletcher, 8/10)

[ABC News: Florida Confirms Case Of Brain-Eating Amoeba](#)

The Florida Department of Health has confirmed a case of brain-eating amoeba. The potentially deadly infection was contracted by a swimmer who bathed in unsanitary water at a private residence

in Broward County, ABC News 10 reports. The amoeba, whose scientific name is *Naegleria fowleri*, can cause a rare and devastating infection of the brain, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). (Gallagher, 8/11)

WOMEN'S HEALTH

14. Anti-Abortion Activist's Group Gets \$1.6M As Part Of Texas' Healthy Woman Program

The Healthy Texas Women program absorbs an old program that ousted Planned Parenthood, which criticized the grant saying it funnels "hard-earned tax dollars in support of their anti-abortion agenda."

[The New York Times: Texas Women's Health Program Adds Abortion Opponent's Group](#)

A revamped women's health program in Texas that ousted Planned Parenthood is giving a \$1.6 million state contract to the nonprofit of an anti-abortion activist, who state officials said Wednesday submitted a "robust" proposal for helping low-income women in rural areas. The Heidi Group's Carol Everett has been a visible abortion opponent at the Texas Legislature. She supported two major anti-abortion restrictions the U.S. Supreme Court struck down in June, and last year, Republican lawmakers incensed by undercover video taken of Planned Parenthood operations and staffers invited her to discuss abortion clinics. (8/10)

[The Texas Tribune: Anti-Abortion Advocate's Group Receives Large Women'S Health Grant](#)

A group led by an anti-abortion advocate appears to be one of the largest recipients of state funding from the "Healthy Texas Women" program, which lawmakers recently created to help women find health care services paid for by the state. The Heidi Group, a Round Rock-based center that has promoted alternatives to abortion to low-income women, is set to receive \$1.6 million from the women's health program, according to the comptroller's office. That makes it the second-highest grant recipient on the current list, behind the Harris County public health department, which will receive \$1.7 million. (Walters, 8/10)

In other news, a new documentary highlights the stories of women who are living under Missouri's strict abortion laws —

[St. Louis Public Radio: Documentary Highlights Voices Left Out Of Abortion Debate: The Women Who Have Them](#)

After the Missouri Legislature passed a law in 2014 requiring women to wait 72 hours before terminating a pregnancy, a team of filmmakers started collecting their stories. They interviewed dozens of women over several months, many of whom had crossed the Mississippi River to go to a clinic in Illinois, where the rules governing abortions are more relaxed. (Bouscaren, 8/11)

STATE WATCH

15. State Highlights: Health Industry Is Fueling Texas Economy; Delaware City's Needle Exchange Program To Go Statewide

Outlets report on health news from Texas, Delaware, Ohio, Minnesota, Florida, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, California, Colorado and Georgia.

[San Antonio Express-News: State Has Become 'Health Care Texas'](#)

The Texas economy, long driven by manufacturing and oil, is now being fueled by something much more stable — the booming health care industry, a Texas Workforce Commission official said Wednesday in Live Oak. (Hendricks, 8/10)

[The Washington Post: New Law Will Expand Needle Exchange Program](#)

A needle exchange program currently confined to the city of Wilmington is going statewide. Legislation being signed into law Thursday by Gov. Jack Markell authorizes the statewide expansion of the needle exchange program, which is aimed at reducing the spread of HIV, hepatitis and other diseases. Lawmakers approved the bill earlier this summer on the final night of this year's legislative session. (8/11)

[Cleveland Plain Dealer: Cuyahoga County Would Lose \\$20 Million A Year In Sales Tax Revenue Under Proposed Changes](#)

Cuyahoga County would lose about \$20 million a year under a federally mandated change to the way Medicaid managed care companies are taxed, county executive Armond Budish said. Ohio, though, is looking for a way around the sales tax losses, which would hit counties and transit authorities across the state -- and elsewhere across the country. The state has until the end of its next regular legislative session – June 30, 2017 – to alter its taxing structure for those managed care companies, said John Charlton, director of communications for the Ohio Office of Budget and Management. (Farkas, 8/10)

[Star Tribune: Psychiatric Patients With Nowhere To Go Languish In Minnesota Hospitals](#)

Hundreds of Minnesotans with mental health problems are languishing in hospital psychiatric units for weeks, even months, because they have nowhere to go for less intensive care, according to a comprehensive study to be released this week. As a result, private hospitals are absorbing millions of dollars in unreimbursed costs, while patients who are well enough to be released are being deprived more appropriate care at a fraction of the cost. (Serres, 8/10)

[Orlando Sentinel: Russell Home In Orlando Works Out Deal With State](#)

The six-decade-old Russell Home for Atypical Children, facing closure by the state two months ago, has worked out a deal that should allow all current residents to stay — thanks to an outpouring of support from local residents and political representatives...The complicated deal — hammered out after an anonymous complaint was filed last October — requires the nonprofit to split its property into two addresses, modify its already-in-progress \$1.8 million construction project and buy a portable classroom for its day program. (Santich, 8/10)

[The Philadelphia Inquirer: Philly Courts Start Moving Mentally Ill Detainees From Custody To Treatment](#)

Seven months after Pennsylvania officials settled an ACLU lawsuit over treatment delays for mentally ill people awaiting trial, the Philadelphia courts have moved a first handful of defendants from prison to medical care. Seven people in the custody of the Philadelphia prisons were ordered transferred Wednesday to one of three new mental health facilities in the city, according to Gregg Blender, a lawyer in the mental health unit of the Defender Association of Philadelphia. (Slobodzian, 8/11)

[The Tennessean: Franklin Mayor Hosts Brainstorming On Tennessee Health Issues](#)

As part of National Health Center Week, Franklin Mayor Ken Moore invited health care workers and community leaders from across the region to Williamson County on Wednesday to brainstorm on how to make the state a healthier place to live. Although Moore, a retired surgeon, and other health care professionals addressed the group, the mayor said the primary focus of the meeting would be the round table discussions that would follow. (Buie, 8/10)

[San Francisco Chronicle: In New Fairfield, Tensions Over Teachers' Health Insurance](#)

School district officials have created an advisory committee to address concerns about its health insurance plan and are now recruiting members from other town boards and unions to participate. The move follows repeated requests by the town's teachers' union, the New Fairfield Education Association, to switch to the state's health insurance plan. The union says the state plan would save its members and the district money. (Rigg, 8/10)

[East Bay Times: Contra Costa County: More Birds Test Positive For West Nile Virus](#)

Five dead birds and one sentinel chicken in separate communities tested positive for West Nile virus, the Contra Costa County Mosquito and Vector Control District reported Wednesday. The birds were found in Concord, Alamo, Orinda, Brentwood and Antioch. The chicken is from Holland Tract, near Knightsen. County officials currently do not plan to fog for mosquitoes. If they bite humans, infected mosquitoes can pass along the virus, which in some cases can be fatal. (Cameron, 8/10)

[Cleveland Plain Dealer: Cleveland Ranks Among Nation's Worst Metro Areas For Air Pollution-Related Deaths, Illnesses](#)

The Cleveland area leads the state in the number of deaths and serious health problems caused by air pollution, and ranks ninth worst in the country, according to a new report released today. The Health of the Air report, compiled by the American Thoracic Society and New York University's Marron Institute of Urban Management, found that air pollution causes as many as 9,320 deaths each year in metropolitan areas in the U.S. The number of air pollution-related deaths are comparable to the 9,967 alcohol-related traffic deaths that occurred in the U.S. in 2014. (McCarty, 8/10)

[The Denver Post: Colorado Board To Vote On Ending Diet-Soda Ban In High Schools](#)

A proposal to lift the seven-year ban on diet sodas in Colorado's high schools would feed a variety of health problems among the state's school kids, including obesity and tooth decay, health advocates say. Several groups, including the Colorado PTA, have lined up against the idea, saying it would open school doors to bad health habits and soda companies offering corporate sponsorships to cash-starved school districts. (Whaley, 8/10)

[Gwinnett Daily Post: Dacula Woman Files Malpractice Suit Over Flesh-Eating Bacteria](#)

Cindy Martinez, a former Marine, and husband David, a Gwinnett County police officer, say Northeast Georgia Physicians Group — Urgent Care and Dr. Minkailu Sesay missed signs of a serious infection and sepsis last summer. In the months that followed, the story captured widespread attention as the wife had numerous surgeries from the unexplained ailment and the community rallied around the family to lend support and funds. The Martinez family was unrelentingly positive throughout the ordeal, calling the wife's survival a "miracle" due of praise to God. (Sharpe, 8/9)

WEEKEND READING

[16. Longer Looks: Noticing Cardiac Arrest; Bug Hunting; And The Science Of Cupping](#)

Each week, KHN's Shefali Luthra finds interesting reads from around the Web.

[The Atlantic: Why Don't Doctors Recognize Cardiac Arrest?](#)

When people's hearts stop beating, they lose consciousness in seconds. If standing, they fall. If sitting, they slump over. Their bodies jerk, and reflexively, they gasp. Those breaths are deceptive. They can trick physicians and nurses into thinking a hospital patient is experiencing a seizure, not cardiac arrest. And that misinterpretation can delay a shot at resuscitation. (Robin Tricoles, 8/8)

[Stat: Deep In The Night, Hunting Deadly Bugs In The Name Of Science](#)

In Latin America, Chagas is a public health crisis: millions have the disease, and only 1 percent of them get adequate treatment. In the United States, the illness is rare, and transmission even more so: Most of the estimated 300,000 people who are infected caught the parasite from a kissing bug in Latin America. Yet those official statistics may be low, because Chagas is often overlooked and misdiagnosed by American doctors. And the most basic facts about its local transmission — including which strains of parasites are transmitted by which species of kissing bug in which parts of the southern US — remain largely unknown. (Boodman, 8/10)

[Vox: Michael Phelps Uses Cupping To Ease His Muscle Pain. What Does Science Say?](#)

When Michael Phelps took to the water to swim in the 4x100-meter relay Sunday, many noticed weird purple circles covering his right shoulder. The dots are the result of cupping, the latest alternative therapy elite athletes are using to try to recover faster and perform better. But as with a lot of alternative therapies, the science on these medicinal hickeys is pretty inconclusive, suggesting you may not need to sprint off to a cupping practitioner to try it out on your sore muscles. (Brian Resnick, 8/8)

[The New Yorker: The Social Network In Your Gut](#)

In Fiji, [Ilana] Brito sought to understand not only how bacteria move between human communities but also how genes move between bacterial communities. Unlike most human cells, bacteria have a flexible genome, meaning that they can pick up stretches of genetic material from viruses, other bacteria, or dustings of DNA in their immediate environment. (Wudan Yan, 8/9)

[Vox: Rio 2016: Why Being As Flexible As An Olympic Gymnast Isn't Necessarily A Good Thing](#)

If you did the President's Challenge Sit and Reach test in gym class, you probably learned that flexibility is something to strive for. Or if you ever played a sport, you were likely taught that you should always stretch to prevent injuries and reduce soreness. But it turns out many of the benefits of flexibility and stretching have been overstated. (Julia Belluz, 8/10)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

[17. Viewpoints: Medicaid's Shortcomings; Mixed Messages Regarding Pain And Opioids](#)

A selection of opinions on health care from around the country.

[The Wall Street Journal: How Medicaid Fails The Poor](#)

Americans should be more worried than ever about Medicaid, which provides health insurance for America's most vulnerable. The cost of the \$500 billion program is expected to rise to \$890 billion by 2024, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Yet more spending doesn't necessarily mean better care for beneficiaries, 57% of whom are low-income minorities. The expansion of Medicaid is one of the most misguided parts of ObamaCare—shamefully expanding second-class health care for the poor. (Scott W. Atlas, 8/10)

[JAMA Forum: The Pain And Opioid Epidemics: Policy And Vital Signs](#)

Near the end of my tenure as editor-in-chief of AJN, the American Journal of Nursing in 2009, I asked one of the coordinators of our pain column to write an article on opioid dependence and addiction. The diversion and misuse of drugs such as oxycodone, with a resultant spike in overdose deaths, had been widely reported in the news media. Her surprising response continues to resonate for me as we face the urgent public health problem of opioid abuse. (Diana Mason, 8/9)

JAMA: Medical Board Expectations For Physicians Recommending Marijuana

The “prescribing” of marijuana, however, remains illegal under federal law, where it is classified as a Schedule I substance under the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, meaning that the federal government considers marijuana a substance with a high potential for dependency or addiction, with no accepted medical use in treatment. Therefore, under federal law, marijuana cannot be knowingly or intentionally distributed, dispensed, or possessed, and an individual who aids and abets another in violating federal law or engages in a conspiracy to purchase, cultivate, or possess marijuana may be punished to the same extent as the individual who commits the crime. (Jumayun J. Chaudhry, Arthur S. Hengerer, and Gregory B. Snyder, 8/9)

Stat: 'Sunshine' Laws Were Meant To Protect Docs From Undue Influence

More than 100 state and national medical societies are trying to water down the Physician Payments Sunshine Act, a law that protects doctors and their patients from undue influence by pharmaceutical and medical device companies. They’re welcome to do that. But they can’t rewrite history in the process. … As the person who wrote the first draft of the Sunshine Act, and then worked for years to get it passed, I’d like to notify American doctors: “Your professional societies are misleading you.” In fact, our concern about corporate bias and poor quality in medical education and scientific publishing was one thing that led us to promote the bill in the first place. (Paul D. Thacker, 8/10)

The Fiscal Times: Here's Proof That A Single Payer Health System Could Break The Bank

Both critics and advocates of Obamacare have assumed that a fallback position exists for a collapse in the government-run markets. A failure of the Affordable Care Act would prompt demands to transition from controlled markets to outright socialized medicine. However, Colorado’s experiment has become yet another cautionary tale about the dangers of single-payer systems. (Edward Morrissey, 8/11)

The New York Times: We're So Confused: The Problems With Food And Exercise Studies

Nearly everything you have been told about the food you eat and the exercise you do and their effects on your health should be met with a raised eyebrow. Dozens of studies are publicized every week. But those studies hardly slake people’s thirst for answers to questions about how to eat or how much to exercise. Does exercise help you maintain your memory? What kind? Walking? Intense exercise? Does eating carbohydrates make you fat? Can you prevent breast cancer by exercising when you are young? Do vegetables protect you from heart disease? (Gina Kolata, 8/11)

The Columbus Dispatch: Ignoring Zika Threat Will Backfire

This was not unexpected. After months of warnings from public health officials and scientists, the first locally transmitted cases of the Zika virus were reported in South Florida. Any illusion that this mysterious menace would not take hold in local mosquito populations and threaten multitudes more Floridians is gone. Any notion that the threat was overblown is dispelled. President Barack Obama, more than 40 Senate Democrats and Republican Sen. Marco Rubio want Congress to return to Washington to deal with the issue, which is exactly what should happen. (8/11)

The Hill: New FDA Vaping Regulations Will Harm Public Health

Going back to the nation’s founding, cigarette smoking has wreaked havoc on U.S. public health and contributed to an astronomical death toll. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarette smoking causes about one of every five deaths in the United States each year. Despite decades of anti-tobacco education and abstinence-promotion messaging, the problem persists, with an estimated 40 million adults currently who smoke cigarettes and thousands more teens who try their first cigarette each day. (Caroline Kitchens, 8/10)

Kansas City Star: Kansas Must Correct National Fall In Rankings On Health Of Seniors

When the election dust is finally settled in November and the new Kansas legislators are sworn in, they will find they have a lot of work to do to help the state’s most vulnerable residents. Those

Kansans have lost a lot of ground since Gov. Sam Brownback and the Republican-dominated Legislature pushed through tax cuts in 2012 for the wealthiest residents and limited liability companies in hopes of generating a cornucopia of jobs. The experiment has failed miserably, and the burden of balancing Kansas' cash-starved budget has fallen heavily on kids with cuts to education and programs affecting low-income families and senior citizens. (8/10)

[Atlanta Journal-Constitution: Advanced Practice Nurses Can Improve Veteran Care](#)

As more and more physicians move to specialty practices, quality primary and outpatient care are falling by the wayside, and veterans are among those paying the price. That's why the proposal by the Veterans Health Administration to expand the role and authority of nurses is laudable. The proposal would amend the Department of Veterans Affairs' medical regulations policy to allow their patients to receive care from qualified advanced practice registered nurses, or APRNs. The proposal would effectively increase access to quality health care for our veterans. (Sharon Horner, 8/10)

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: The VA Is A System Worth Saving](#)

I am tired of hearing the tragic personal stories, frustrated by reading the news coverage and perplexed by the official responses to the litany of post-9/11 Wisconsin veterans who either die in Veterans Affairs care or are struggling to secure help. There is a pattern and it must stop. Whether it takes place at Tomah VA Medical Center, the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee or at the Iowa City VA Medical Center where a young Wisconsin veteran was seeking treatment, veterans who survived battle overseas are becoming casualties in our own country even as they seek treatment inside the walls of VA hospitals. (Daniel Seehafer, 8/10)

[Stat: 5 Lessons From A Journey Through Depression And Anxiety](#)

In the last four decades, I've been to more psychologists and psychiatrists than I can count, from New York to California, from the East Side to the West Side. ... For whatever reason, I'm now in a place where I feel I can offer advice to others searching for their equilibrium. (Jane Gross, 8/10)

[Sacramento Bee: The Bill Pharma Wants To Bottle Up](#)

Few pocketbook issues are as widespread or as hard to fathom as the soaring cost of prescription drugs. Enter Senate Bill 1010, up Thursday in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. A sunshine bill, it doesn't set prices or raise taxes; it just demands a few fundamental, and extremely relevant, facts. SB 1010 would require drugmakers to give some justification and notice before they raise the price of big-ticket drugs in the market. (8/10)

[San Francisco Chronicle: Community Health Centers Have Bipartisan Support - SFGate](#)

In an election season the news headlines may lead us to believe that politicians can't agree on anything. Not so fast. There is an issue on which both Republicans and Democrats can and do agree — the importance of community health centers in the U.S. health care system. Community health centers have been around for over five decades, effectively rooting out sickness and poverty in some of the most challenged communities. (Craig Glover, 8/10)

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